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GOTTFRIED KELLERS DRAMATISCHE BESTREBUNGEN. Von Dr. Max Preitz. Beiträge zur deutschen Literaturwissenschaft, herausgegeben von Prof. Dr. Ernst Elster. Nr. 12. Marburg, N. G. Elwert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung. pp. 187. Unbound M. 4.40.

The average reader will doubtless take this volume in hand with some misgivings. It is an unpromising task to point out what a man of letters has failed to accomplish and the presumable reasons therefor, a task from which at best one might expect only barren and negative results. This volume, however, is offered as a contribution to German *Literaturwissenschaft*, and as a scientific study of a literary man it is unquestionably a successful and able piece of work, with results more substantial than the title would lead one to anticipate.

Those who know Keller only from his published works, from the paragraphs devoted to him in the standard histories of German literature and even from Baechtold's exhaustive biography will be surprised at the revelation here made of the intensity and vitality of his dramatic aspirations and the extent of his dramatic plans.

Making all necessary allowance for the over-emphasis and exaggeration that almost of necessity result from the exclusive consideration of one phase of an author's life and activity, Dr. Preitz has yet proven beyond peradventure that for years Keller cherished the hope of accomplishing his best work in the field of dramatic art and that his emergence from this controlling idea, like his earlier renunciation of painting, was brought about more by inner necessity than by voluntary choice. In the perhaps disproportionate respect which Keller showed for the drama above other forms of literary art he was part and parcel of the generation to which he belonged, for, as Dr. Preitz well expresses it: "What was more natural than that Keller should turn to this form of poetry in an age when the drama stood upon new heights, when literary criticism indeed estimated the capacity of a poet according to the measure of his dramatic achievement?" This universal taste and demand for the drama which he shared with his contemporaries was supplemented in Keller's case by his unquestioned talent for individualization (*Gestaltungskraft*),

his delicate critical sense and thorough knowledge of dramatic theory and history, so that even so gifted a critic as Hettner was misled into encouraging Keller to devote himself to dramatic production.

What was lacking then in Keller's equipment that brought his long cherished ambitions and frequent endeavors to naught?

The answer to this question is the most important single aim that Dr. Preitz has had in view and while it is perhaps unreasonable to demand a reply in a single sentence the following passages from the last pages of the monograph leave little to be desired:

"The creation of dramatic characters would have been for Keller an act of the will; not a product of his inner soul." "As in life so also in his art the pathetic, the heroic, everything melodramatic was lacking in Keller, so also intense concentration, the power of opposing mighty contrasting elements one to the other." Or, to use Keller's own words, he feared, *maniriert und anspruchsvoll zu werden, wenn er den Mund voll nehme.*

Although the answer to the question why Keller failed to achieve success in the drama is the simple one that might have been anticipated from the beginning: his talent did not lie in that direction, still no reader will feel that Dr. Preitz has labored in vain.

The passages and scattered remarks of the master which the author has here assembled under the heading Keller's *Dramaturgie* form interesting, at times inspiring reading and reveal a side of Keller's activity not generally appreciated. The description and reconstruction of nearly a score of dramas which the poet had in mind at different times and which survive in some cases only in note book jottings, in others in nearly completed form, is done with skill and success. It is here perhaps that the author has made his most valuable contribution to the literature on Gottfried Keller. For while others have speculated with more or less plausibility on the question of Keller's dramatic talent no one has hitherto gathered up, elucidated and filled out his dramatic fragments with such scholarly care and sympathetic insight as Dr. Preitz exhibits in this volume.

Here and there also we run across excellent bits of criticism or appreciation which are welcome quite apart from the light

they throw upon the main question which the author has in mind. Here might be mentioned the discussion of Keller's use of the words *zierlich* and *anmutig*, *ziervoll* and *anmutsvoll*, his delicate perception of the significance of the mere sound of words as shown in the names he chooses for his characters, the nature of his metaphors and similes, the character of the material with which he creates his imaginary world.

It is not so easy to bestow praise when we find our author offering personal criticism of Keller for his failure to renounce the drama with military precision and promptitude at a time when he recognized or should have recognized that his talents ran in other lines.

When he says, for instance: "It was not his own conviction, not a manly decision as the result of the recognition of his insufficient ability which led him away from painting, but the art of poetry," he is, perhaps unconsciously, setting up an ideal of human conduct to which he tacitly invites his readers to assent and then reproaching his hero for failure to measure up to this standard. The fact that Keller recognized that he could achieve happier results in literature than in painting and acted accordingly is surely no occasion for animadversions even when we know that this conviction dawned upon him only slowly.

Although Dr. Preitz's style is vigorous and his diction as a rule clear, one is forced nevertheless to conclude that he has lost sight of the *Klarheit* and *Einfachheit* which he so much admires in Keller when we read such sentences as: "Die Voraussetzung genauester Erinnerung Baechtolds scheint noch mehr aus der Hinrichtungsszene, wie Keller sie geplant haben soll, nicht gemacht zu werden dürfen." Nor can we admire either as an artistic or a logical creation the labored metaphor: "Gottfried Kellers langer, erhabener Arbeitsweg durch ein Lebensfeld, das schwere und reiche und goldene Früchte gedeihen und reifen liess, hat zur linken Seite einen Saum niedrigen Gesträuches, das nie recht zur Höhe und Breite gedeihen konnte, spärlicher und dünner wird und nach kurzer Strecke ganz aufhört; das war seine Malertätigkeit. Rechts begleitet den, der Kellers Lebenswanderung nachspürt, bis ans Ende eine ganz ungleichmässige Pflanzenkette; bald dicht und voll, bald

dürr und schwächlich, bald hochaufgeschossen, bald zurückgeblieben, aber niemals völlig abbrechend—Kellers dramatische Dichtung.”

Nevertheless it would be unjust to leave with the reader as final any but a favorable impression of this admirable monograph. Unquestionably Dr. Preitz has made a valuable and permanent contribution to the understanding of one of the world's great literary masters, and as such the volume deserves and will doubtless command the careful attention of all who pass from the mere enjoyment of Keller's writings to a study of the man and his art.

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GOETHE'S HERMANN UND DOROTHEA. Edited for the use of students with notes and vocabulary by Waterman Thomas Hewett, Ph.D., etc. American Book Company.

Professor Hewett, in his new edition of *Hermann und Dorothea*, as is shown by the addition of a vocabulary and certain words in the preface, has in view the needs of high-school pupils and also of young college students. It is with profound regret that I state that the present edition, with its surprising number of shortcomings of various kinds, does not fulfill its purpose. An edition intended for “the elementary study of German” should be absolutely free from mistakes in the text, and practically free from misleading notes. Neither the pupils nor their teachers can be expected to correct misprints or other signs of carelessness, let alone grave blunders of interpretation or grammar. The word of the teacher, if he should really have at hand all the material with which to make the corrections, is as a rule not sufficiently effective as compared with what the pupils see in black and white on the authority of a university-professor.

In speaking of mistakes in the text itself, I do not, of course, mean deviations from the Weimar text, but careless deviations from Hewett's own text as it appears in his former edition and in that of Hatfield, a number of which deviations (V 239,